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ABSTRACT

There exists a longstanding split in European educational thought. Schooling and higher education in the English-speaking world are dominated by the idea of curriculum; whereas in Germany, Scandinavia, and Eastern Europe the intellectual work of students is shaped by the concept of Bildung (students are expected to be self-directed in their choice and pursuit of studies). An exploration of the history of these educational differences is important to understanding the issues presented by potential social and economic, even intellectual union, among the nations of Europe. The paper seeks to bridge the conceptual and historical gulf that divides curriculum from Bildung. First, it recounts the 16th and 17th century circumstances that surrounded the emergence of the curriculum idea. Secondly, it examines the role of 17th century figures, like J. A. Comenius, in the gradual substitution of Bildung for curriculum. Finally, it focuses on the elements of pietist and enlightenment thought that nourished the Bildung concept in 18th century Germany. A 24-item list of references is included. (DB)

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FROM CURRICULUM TO BILDUNG

(Some Preliminary Considerations)

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FROM CURRICULUM TO BILDUNG

(Some Preliminary Considerations)[1]

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The European economic and social community (The Common Market) has had a significant impact upon higher education in the United Kingdom. Currently, students from EC countries pay the same fees as British students; and the Brussels-funded ERASMUS programme fosters academic exchanges throughout the common market.

Nevertheless, cross-cultural difficulties arise as teachers and students carry their intellectual baggage from country to country. Is it possible, therefore, to establish an intellectual union alongside the economic union of the Common Market?
The period between the Reformation and the Enlightenment is the source, I suggest, of these cross national

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[1]Amended version of paper prepared for the 12th International Standing Conference for the History of Education, Charles University, Prague, 23-26th August 1990. The theme of the conference was 'Educational innovation from the Reformation to the Enlightenment.

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difficulties. Students currently registered with British institutions of higher education are increasingly expected to follow a pre-specified programme of studies - a notion that relates back to the Reformation idea of curriculum. By contrast, however, many European students visit Britain with a totally different set of assumptions. They expect to be allowed self-direction and self-determination in their choice and pursuit of studies. Ultimately, their view of intellectual work is shaped by a different organising concept - the Enlightenment concept of Bildung.

The background to this paper, therefore, is a longstanding bifurcation in European educational thought. Schooling and higher education in the English-speaking world are still dominated by the curriculum idea; whereas Germany, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe remain heavily in the thrall of Bildung-related notions. Indeed, when post-Sputnik pedagogic thinking was exported from the USA to Europe in the 1960s, German and Scandinavian educationists often felt obliged to reintroduce the term curriculum into their pedagogic discourse.

This paper, then, seeks to bridge the conceptual and historical gulf that divides curriculum from Bildung. First, it recounts the sixteenth and seventeenth century circumstances that surrounded the emergence of the curriculum idea. Secondly, it examines the role of seventeenth-century figures - like John Amos Comenius - in the gradual substitution of Bildung for curriculum. And, finally, it focuses on the elements of pietist and enlightenment thought that nourished the Bildung concept in eighteenth-century Germany.

I first encountered the problematic relationship between curriculum and Bildung when I visited Sweden in 1985. Late twentieth-century Swedish culture resonates strongly with

recent (i.e. post-1945) anglo-saxon thinking; but it also contains many echoes of its earlier links with mainland Europe. Thus, contemporary Swedish educationists struggle with ideas that relate both to curriculum and Bildung (bildning in Swedish).

Of course, Europe in 1990 is different from the intellectual and political cultures that originally brought curriculum and Bildung into being. Equally, the Prague of 1990 is not the Praguee of 1985. I hope, therefore, that this paper not only bridges differences between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries but also that it makes a small contribution to the harmonisation of twentieth century educational thought.

Curriculum

The curriculum notion emerged from Renaissance and Reformation revisions of medieval thought. Its appearance was part of the process - discussed in Anthony Grafton & Lisa Jardine's From Humanism to the Humanities (1986) - whereby the 'individualisation...of early humanists gave way to an ideology of routine, order and, above all "method" ' (p. 123). Indeed, as Grafton & Jardine indicate, this transition did much to promote the cause of schooling:

> Method was the catchword of promoters of humanist education from the 1510s onwards. The practical emphasis on procedure signals a shift in intellectual focus, on the part of pedagogic reformers, from the ideal end product of a classical education (the perfect orator...) to classroom aids textbooks, manuals and teaching drills (Ibid. p. 124).

Nevertheless, From Humanism to the Humanities fails to make

reference to the seemingly contemporaneous appearance of the term curriculum. My own view - discussed in Hamilton (1989, 1990a) - is that the attention given to method and order in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was also the forcing house of curriculum. Note, for instance, the emergence of the curriculum idea in the following triad of sixteenth-century statements (reported in Walter Ong's Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue, 1958). First, there is the juxtaposition of 'collection of propositions' (a late medieval notion) and 'method'(a Renaissance idea) in the 1539 observation by the founder of the Strasburg Gymnasium, John Sturm (1539):

> An art is an abundant collection of propositions. But in setting up the various arts a certain, short and direct way, a kind of short cut, has to be used. This the Greeks call method, such as may be used for teaching and communication (Ong, 1958, pp. 232-3, quotation abridged).

Secondly, methodising and ordering are linked in Questions of Dialectic (first edition 1547), prepared by the founder of the Lutheran Gymnasium of Nuremburg, Philip Melanchthon:

> Method is a habit, that is, a science or an art which finds and opens a way through overgrown and impenetrable places and pulls out and ranges in order the things pertaining to the matter proposed (Ibid. p. 237, quotation abridged)

Finally, the high priest of method seems to have been Peter Ramus (?1515-1567), a former student of John Sturm. 'Method', Ramus wrote in the 1569 edition of his Dialectic 'is deposition by which that enunciation is placed first which is first in the absolute order of knowledge, that next which is next, and so on; and thus there is an

unbroken progression from universals to singulars (Ibid. p. 249, quotation abridged)

Despite its insight into sixteenth-century pedagogic practice, Ong's analysis - like Grafton & Jardine's - also also fails to note the emergence of curriculum. And recent analyses by Patricia Rief and Sheldon Wolin are similarly silent, yet both identify the sixteenth-century convergence of method and pedagogy:

> If one were to select a single epithet to describe the educational atmosphere of the early seventeenth century, it would be 'methodical'. In this period the intense interest in method which prevailed throughout the sixteenth century seems to have reached its peak. There are numerous treatises on method in general, books of all sorts frequently contained the word 'method' in their titles, and textbook authors adevertised their wards as 'methodically presented' or 'arranged in methodological order'....But the method on which they insist has little, if any, connection with scientific method as we understand it. It is fundamentally a pedagogical method, the method by which all curricular disciplines are taught. (Reif, 1969, p. 28, emphasis added).

And,

> One way to get at the idea of method is to recognise that it has a history reaching back to ancient Greek philosphy. Like philosophia, methodus was often used in association with the notion of a 'way' (aporie) to truth. Before long, methodus and philosophia began to diverge. Generally speaking, while philosophia and its sister, theoria, tended to stress the arduous difficulties awaiting those who sought truth, the

> devotees of methodus began to emphasize the economy of being methodical, that is of faithfully following a prescribed sequence of mental steps, a 'straight road' in Descartes' phrase. A premonition of this change appeared in the Middle Ages when **methodus** tended to acquire the connotation of a 'shortcut'. It found popular expression in numerous attempts to compose compendia on various subjects. (Wolin, 1973, pp. 32-3)

In fact, the convergence of pedagogy and method is demonstrated in figure 1: the earliest recorded use of the term **curriculum**. It appears in the Professio Regia (1576), a compilation of Ramist 'arts' produced by a protestant printer/publisher of Basel, Thomas Fregius (but usually attributed directly to Peter Ramus). In pedagogic terms, the ramist method comprised the clustering of related commonplaces along the lines, quite literally, of a branching taxonomy. It provided teachers with a series of procedural templates (or route maps) to steer their teaching.

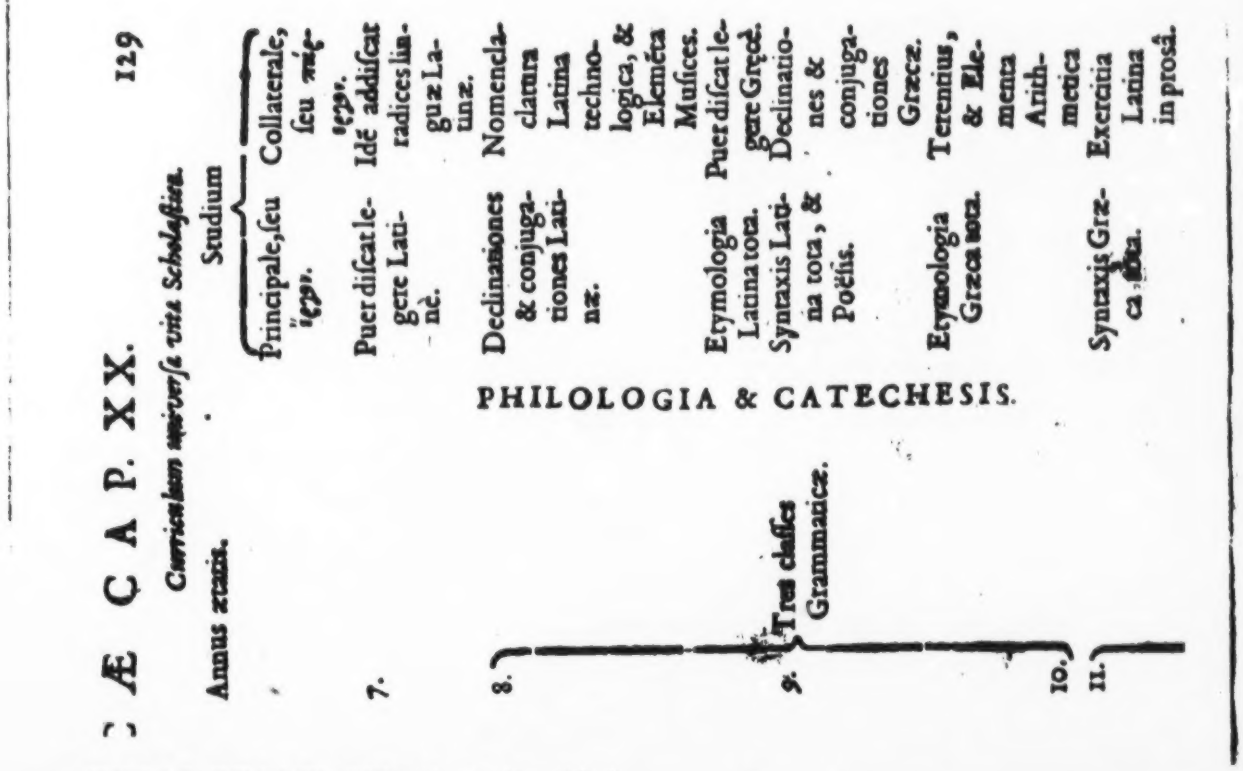
Overall, Ramus' work made two major contributions to the history of schooling. First, it provided a spacial (or topological) framework for restructuring the compendia (i.e. lists of topics) compiled by his predecessors. And secondly, the resultant maps of knowledge began to be used in the sequential organisation of teaching. Ramus' impact was widespread - 150 editions/adaptations of his Dialectic were published between 1555 and 1600 (Ong, 1958, p. 297). Moreover, his ideas seem to have been particularly potent in Calvinist circles. When, for instance, the Professio Regia first appeared, Basel was a 'secure haven of Calvinism' (Evans, 1975, p. 45); and the term curriculum also made early appearances in the records of Glasgow and Leiden universities - both converts to Calvinist practice (Hamilton, 1989, p. 43-4).

Nevertheless, ramist notions of method, order and curriculum also spread beyond Protestant communities. More generally, that is, they served as a 'precurser' of Descartes and cartesianism (Hooykaas, 1960, p. 302)'; and as an important stimulus to encyclopedism - efforts to map the entire natural order of things.

For example, the impact of Ramism can be discerned in editions of Munster's Cosmography (1544 onwards). Early editions had a pre-ramist structure. They were compiled around 'a tour from country to country and across the oceans', and embroidered with 'cities, mountains, rivers, deserts...and customs and ways and activities of strange peoples' (quoted in Strauss, 1966, p. 152). Gradually, however, the organisers of cosmographic compendia - including Munster's - abandoned geographic principles. Instead, they began to follow logical, rational or natural principles. And through this transformation, compendia became encyclopedia:

> Clarity and logic of organisation, the disposition of matter - the printed page, became in fact a preoccupation of editors, almost an end in itself. It is a phenomenon familiar to a student of encyclopedic books of the late sixteenth century, related to the increased fascination with the technical possibilities of typesetting, and to the greater influence exerted by the methodology of Peter Ramus on the accumulation and distribution of knowledge (Ibid, p.152).

The connection between Ramus and encyclopedism is clearly evident in the ramist configurations repeatedly used in the Scientarium omnium encyclopedia (1630) devised by J.H. Alsted (1588-1638) of Herborn Academy (Germany). In fact, however, Alsted is important to this paper for two additional reasons. On the one hand his encyclopedia included the term 'curriculum' (see figure 2); and, on the other hand, Alsted is also remembered for the being one of Jan Amos Comenius' teachers.



Comenius and Seventeenth-century Thought

Besides Alsted, Comenius was also influenced by Francis Bacon (1561-1626). In particular, Comenius accepted Bacon's proposition that the natural world (viz. 'nature') was as important to human understanding as an appreciation of the writings of 'earlier thinkers' (Loemker, 1961, p. 324).

Further, Comenius' brand of militant protestantism also encouraged a belief that nature was both a repository and a manifestation of the the Holy Spirit. And, in turn, such protestants accepted that if the Holy Spirit was duly appreciated, it could also motivate human beings. Thus, the attention Comenius gave to the advancement of teaching and learning - his 'day and night preoccupation for forty years' Sadler (1966, p. 127) - retained a theological underpinning. Education - in its broadest sense - was deemed to be the initiation of human beings into the 'light of God'(Comenius, 1642, p. 149; see also Comenius, 1660).

Armed with these theological premises, Comenius and kindred thinkers argued that, within the overall design of God, humans possess a significant measure of free will and intellectual autonomy. Necessarily, God illuminated the way ahead but human beings could still make choices as they prgressed through the 'trackless wastes' (Comenius, 1642, p. 149)) of the world that was to come[2].

For similar reasons, Comenius also endorsed the human capacity of scepticism. Through critical scrutiny - a God-

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[2]A notable British example of human journeying based on similar assumptions of autonomy and free will is recorded in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (1678)

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given capacity - humans could finally eliminate the residues of pre-Reforamtion dogma from religious and political practice (see Kurdybacka, 1969, p. 93).

In the context of this paper, then, Comenius is a transitional figure. His work, I believe, bears evidence of two contrasting epistemologies: (1) rationalism which harks back to the work of Ramus, Bacon and Descartes, and (2) mysticism which focuses upon the 'inner world of men's souls' (Campagnac, 1938, p. viii).

Ramist, Baconian and Cartesian influences can be seen in Comenius' The Great Didactic (czech version, 1632; latin version, 1676; english version 1896). They are evident, respectively, in chapter titles such as 'The basis of school reform must be exact order in all things' (XIII); 'The exact order of instruction must be borrowed from nature' (XIV); and 'The universal requirements of teaching and of learning; that is to say, a method of teaching and of learning with such certainty that the desired result must of necessity follow'(XVI).

Likewise, The Great Didactic's attention to order and system is also reflected in Comenius' (and/or his translators') use of metaphors drawn from machine production and clockwork; viz,

> knowledge can be impressed on the mind, in the same way that its concrete form can be printed upon paper. In fact we might adapt the term "typography" and call the new method of teaching "didachography" (p. 441).

And:

> As soon as we have succeeded in finding the proper [teaching] method it will be no harder to teach school-

> boys, in any number desired, than with the help of the printing-press to cover a thousand sheets daily with the neatest writing ....The whole process will be as free from friction as is the movement of a clock whose motive power is supplied by the weights (p. 248-9).

From a twentieth-century perspective, such a world picture has been described as 'simple' (Slughter, 1982, p. 5). According to Slaughter (and othrs), early seventeenth-century science was dominated by a (ramist) 'search for order' whereby the 'system of nature and its ordered principles not only existed but could be known, and known certainly'(p. 5). And a further feature of this simple worldview was that early seventeenth-century scientists not only believed that the world was knowable but also that it could be described in linguistic terms isomorphic with the inner essence of things[3].

For these reasons, it is defensible to describe the first half of the seventeenth century as the Golden Age of curriculum thinking. At that time, it was assumed not only that ramist maps of knowledge were isomorphic with the order of nature; but also that such maps provided the true pathway to the essence or meaning of things.

Yet, as Slaughter indicates, this realist worldview - the presumption that nature and language are isomorphic - fell apart in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Theorists, like Boyle, Locke and Newton adopted a contrary standpoint (see Hamilton, 1990b). First, they took up an atomistic view of nature -that the world comprises physical entities (.e.g. atoms, monads) that are not open to direct

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[3]The presumed isomorphism of words and things was central to seventeenth-century interest in language teaching, including Comenius'.

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observation. Thus, within Newton's system of thought - elaborated in Principia Mathematica (1687) - the aim of science was redefined not as the discovery of the nature of things but the prediction of their behaviour, regardless of whether their 'natures are known or not' (Slaughter, 1982, p.194). Indeed, Voltaire's description of calculus - an invention of Fermat, Newton and Leibniz - neatly captured the status of the new science. It was, he claimed, 'the art of numbering and measuring exactly a Thing whose Existence cannot be conceived'(quoted in Kline, 1987, pp. 266-7).

For these reasons, the ramist and rationalist pillars of Comenius' thought failed to survive the seventeenth century - leaving the mystical (subjectivist, idealist) element in his work to make a contribution to the rise of Bildung.

Bildung

As widely recognised, the Bildung concept came to prominence in the German Enlightenment. Subsequently, it was refined and disseminated through the theoretical writings and political initiatives of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1832). But what were the eighteenth-century circumstances that prompted Bildung's rise to prominence? From a British, curriculum-based perspective, three assumptions seem to have been important: (1) the power attributed to the inner (or mental) world of human beings; (2) the harmonisation of piety with rationality; and (3) the recognition of a necessary connection between rationality and freewill.

The notion that the workings of the human psyche had a a dynamic dimension was an important element in early enlightenment thought. Even if humans were ultimately driven by divine forces, it was also accepted (e.g. by

Leibniz) that the day to day activities of humans were also steered by a capacity for 'reflective inwardness' (Meyer, 1952, p. 77).

Mental capacities - and their contribution to dynamic individualism - were also focused upon by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century german Pietists. Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and August Franke (1663-1727), for instance, assumed that the gift of God (cf. divine illumination) endowed human beings with a significant measure of responsibility (cf. choice or freewill) over the shaping of their lives. Human beings were deemed to be responsible agents who, powered by mental forces (cf. motivation), could remould their own lives and, consequently, reconstruct their own circumstances.

For the Pietists, therefore, religious faith was inextricably linked to the exercise of moral choice. But how was this choice to be exercised? One solution was offered by a former student of Leibniz', Christian Wolff (1697-1754) who, like Franke, worked in Halle. Wolff made an important connection between pietism and rationality. For him, both piety and rationality were in accordance with God's design. Indeed, the pursuit of piety was equally the pursuit of rationality.

In their own ways, therefore, Leibniz, Franke and Wolff struggled with a central problem of the Enlightenment - the relationship between the omnipotence of God and the freedom of humankind. Although Wolff retained a link between rationality and christianity, his writings did much to transform earlier interest in eternal salvation into a more secular interest in earthly happiness. Wolff's message, comments Stoeffler (1973, p. 238), 'made it possible for theologicans, pastors and laity alike to regard themselves

as being faithful to the Christian tradition, on the one hand, while on the other they could pride themselves upon being utterly relevant to the new age that was dawning'. But, Stoeffler continues, possibilities of 'radical change' were also 'implicit in the Wolffian system'(238). Wolff, that is, had:

> shifted the ultimate criterion of the validity of religious insights from revelation to reason; he had substituted a natural ethic for a revealed ethic; and he had virtually transformed man's interest in eternal salvation into mere desire for temporal happiness (p. 239).

Indeed, a similar comment was made by Bruford - that Bildung was a 'secular substitute for salvation'(1962, quoted in Sweet, 1978, p. 52).

Prompted by these suppositions, Wilhelm von Humboldt and others (e.g. Goethe and Herder) brought the notion of Bildung to intellectual prominence. In doing so, they seem to have emphasised its neo-humanist (i.e. Enlightenment) dimension. Bildung became identified with the notion of human-ness (or, perhaps more accurately, 'maleness'). As human beings exercised their (God-given) humanity, they actively cultivated both their minds and themselves. And, finally, the popularisers of Bildung assumed that shaping the human personality also had wider social consequences. Insofar as citizens could be educated (or shaped) according to Enlightenment ideals, it was assumed that the intellectual, moral and aesthetic purposes of the State would simultaneously be accomplished (See, for instance, Sorkin 1983).

Conclusion

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This paper began by noting an important difference between curriculum thinking and Bildung thinking. Reflecting its Reformation origins (cf. Calvinist assumptions about predestination), curriculum was a directive concept. Schooling was to be organised around pre-planned pedagogic pathways. By constrast, Enlightenment (or liberal) attention to freewill and human emancipation rendered Bildung as a less-directive idea. As Sweet points out, the purpose of Bildung-related education was facilitative, to:

> provide the conditions in which each student would develop to the maximum and as harmoniously as possible, his various capacities, moral, intellectual and aesthetic. The aim was to open up to every individual the opportunity for a humane existence. Every school from the most elementary to the university should be concerned above all with promoting the idea of Bildung among students of all ages and all social origins' (Sweet, 1980, p. 36)

Despite considerable overlap, Curriculum and Bildung notions have fueled the school systems of Europe and elsewhere. Further, their evolution did not stop in 1800. Both concepts were exposed to new circumstances in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, as the twenty-first century approaches, the issues surrounding the early history of curriculum and Bildung (e.g. debates about state intervention, teacher direction and learner choice) remain high on the international agenda of schooling. Even if the solutions proposed by Ramus, Comenius, Leibniz and Humboldt no longer command our attention, the issues they addressed remained undimmed by the passage of time.

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Postcript

Dutch and german contributors to the discussion of my (five minute) presentation in Prague suggested that I had erroneously noted the disappearance of 'curriculum' from german discourse. I had based my statement on (1) the fact that is is missing from the 672 pages of Langenscheidt's Concise German Dictionary (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1967) and (2) from various introductory statements in U. Hameyer, K. Frey, H. Haft & F. Kuebart (eds.), Curriculum Research in Europe, Lisse: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1986 (ISBN 90 265 0713 5).

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